



Saguaro National Park News Release

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For Immediate Release

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DEER HEAD FIRE CONTINUES TO BURN IN THE RINCON MOUNTAINS OF SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK

Tucson, AZ – The lightning-ignited Deer Head Fire burning in the Rincon Mountains of Saguaro National Park is estimated to be approximately 135 acres as of Saturday morning, having expanded slightly towards the east, away from Manning Camp. Fire behavior continues to be mild due to high humidity and cooler overnight temperatures. Saguaro National Park is managing the fire for multiple objectives, including using fire to achieve natural resource benefits and to reduce hazardous fuels.

The fire is burning in wilderness, where it is functioning in its natural role, helping reduce fuel loads and maintain wildlife habitat. Values to be protected include Mexican spotted owl habitat and the historic Manning Cabin, located approximately one mile from the fire.

Smoke impacts are a key consideration in how to manage this fire, as smoke is occasionally visible from Tucson, Vail, Benson and the surrounding area. Though the Deer Head fire is producing relatively little smoke, smoke may settle in the east side of Tucson when air temperatures cool at night and in the early morning hours, usually lifting during the day. Yesterday's poor visibility in the Tucson Basin was largely due to dust from thunderstorm outflows in Mexico.

Lightning-ignited fires are important in maintaining healthy forests in the mountains of southern Arizona. Fire historically burned through the high elevation ponderosa pine forests of southeastern Arizona every few years, but past fire suppression has created unnatural conditions with a build-up of downed trees and dense underbrush in many places. Periodic low to moderate intensity wildfire helps prevent large, intense wildfires, recycles nutrients, and fills many other roles.

For the safety of hikers and campers, the following temporary backcountry trail closures remain in place, including Italian Spring (south of Park boundary), Cowhead Saddle, North Slope, Fire Loop, Spud Rock, Switchback, Mica Mountain, Mica Meadow, Bonita, Devils Bathtub, East Slope trail, Deerhead Spring, Turkey Creek (west of Park boundary), Miller Creek (west of park boundary), Heartbreak Ridge, and Manning Camp (east of Douglas Springs intersection). This includes a segment of the Arizona Trail: Italian Spring Trail at the park boundary extending to

the Douglas Spring-Manning Camp Trail intersection). Campground closures within the park include Manning Camp, Grass Shack, Happy Valley, and Spud Rock. All off-trail areas within Saguaro National Park east of Douglas Spring Trail and Manning Camp Trails are also closed.

Seven firefighters were flown to Manning Cabin by helicopter yesterday, and seven additional firefighters and support staff will be transported to the area this afternoon, if weather permits. They will use Manning Cabin as a base camp and are preparing to protect the historic structures, if necessary. Currently, the fire is not threatening any historic structures in the Rincon Mountains.

The Deer Head Fire was first detected late morning on July 24, 2014. The fire is burning within the Saguaro Wilderness, in steep, rugged terrain at elevations over 7,500 feet. The area is primarily ponderosa pine and oak woodlands and has burned six times since the 1940s, and most recently during the 1994 Rincon Fire. The fire is moving into areas burned by prescribed fires in 1993- 2010. Part of the area was planned for a prescribed fire this summer or fall.

For updated information please visit <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/3999/>, <http://twitter.com/SaguaroNPS>, or call the park's Fire Information Hotline at (520) 733-5150. Additional images are available at <http://Facebook.com/SaguaroNationalPark>, For information about the natural role of fire, visit the park's website: <http://www.nps.gov/sagu/parkmgmt/firemanagement.htm>.

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